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SUBJECT: FRENCH THINKING ON UNSC BURMA RESOLUTION

REF: STATE 01060

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt for reasons 1.4 b and d.

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: France continues to support the UNSC resolution on Burma as the optimal outcome, but would accept a PRST if necessary to avoid a Chinese veto. Whether a UNSCR or a PRST, the MFA highlighted two points that remain "non-negotiable:" support for U/SYG Gambari's good offices mission and a call to release Aung San Suu Kyi. The MFA believes a wavering Indonesia is the linchpin to a resolution -- if Burma's ASEAN colleagues signal support for a resolution, China could be pushed to abstain. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Poloff met January 5 with Benoit Guidee, desk officer in the MFA's International Organizations office, and Jeremie Petit, Burma desk officer, to deliver reftel demarche. Guidee and Petit reiterated strong French support for the UNSC resolution, but also emphasized the French position that "the substance is more important than the form," so France would accept a PRST if the Chinese appeared likely to veto a resolution. When pressed, Guidee insisted that a PRST need not represent a weakened position as long as it retained the two points that remain "non-negotiable" for the French: support for U/SYG Gambari's good offices mission and a call to release Aung San Suu Kyi. That said, both Guidee and Petit emphasized that the GoF continues to prefer a resolution.

¶3. (C) The MFA views Indonesia, as Burma's neighbor and a proxy for ASEAN, as the key swing vote, Guidee said. If Indonesia can be brought around to support the resolution, it will push ASEAN to acknowledge the regional threat posed by its neighbor, and will make China's position that much more uncomfortable. However, in the French view, a resolution that lacks the support of the Security Council's regional power will carry little weight with the Burmese regime.

¶4. (C) Guidee and Petit suggested that "more temperate" language in the draft resolution could mollify the Chinese and even elicit a positive vote from Indonesia. Guidee called the use of the word "condemn" in PP7 a "non-starter" for the Chinese, proposing instead "deplore." Further, the contention that the situation in Burma "poses serious risks to peace and security in the region," resembles too closely Chapter VII language for the Chinese taste, he added.

¶5. (C) On other swing votes, the MFA is not optimistic. Guidee said he does not envision South African support under any circumstances. Guidee and Petit did not envision either Archbishop Desmond Tutu's early support for action on Burma or Indonesia's hypothetical support for the resolution as sufficient inducement. "What is in it for them?" Guidee asked, explaining that South Africa does not have enough self-interest in a stable Burma to provoke China's ire. Guidee also anticipated that Italy could be "more squishy

than expected," and more readily willing to accept a PRST, as the Italians tend to view engagement with isolated countries as the best means to restore them to the international community.

¶6. (C) COMMENT: While the French position has not changed, the GoF views the resolution as primarily a U.S. project. The GoF seems disinclined to do any heavy lifting in order to push fence sitters such as Indonesia toward an affirmative vote, and in the event that a Chinese veto becomes more likely, the GoF might promote a PRST in order to placate Russia and China. End Comment.

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